

DUNLAP (ALEX.)

ADDRESS

OF

ALEX. DUNLAP, A.M., M.D.,

OF SPRINGFIELD, OHIO,

AT THE

TWENTY-FOURTH ANNUAL MEETING

OF THE

OHIO STATE MEDICAL SOCIETY,

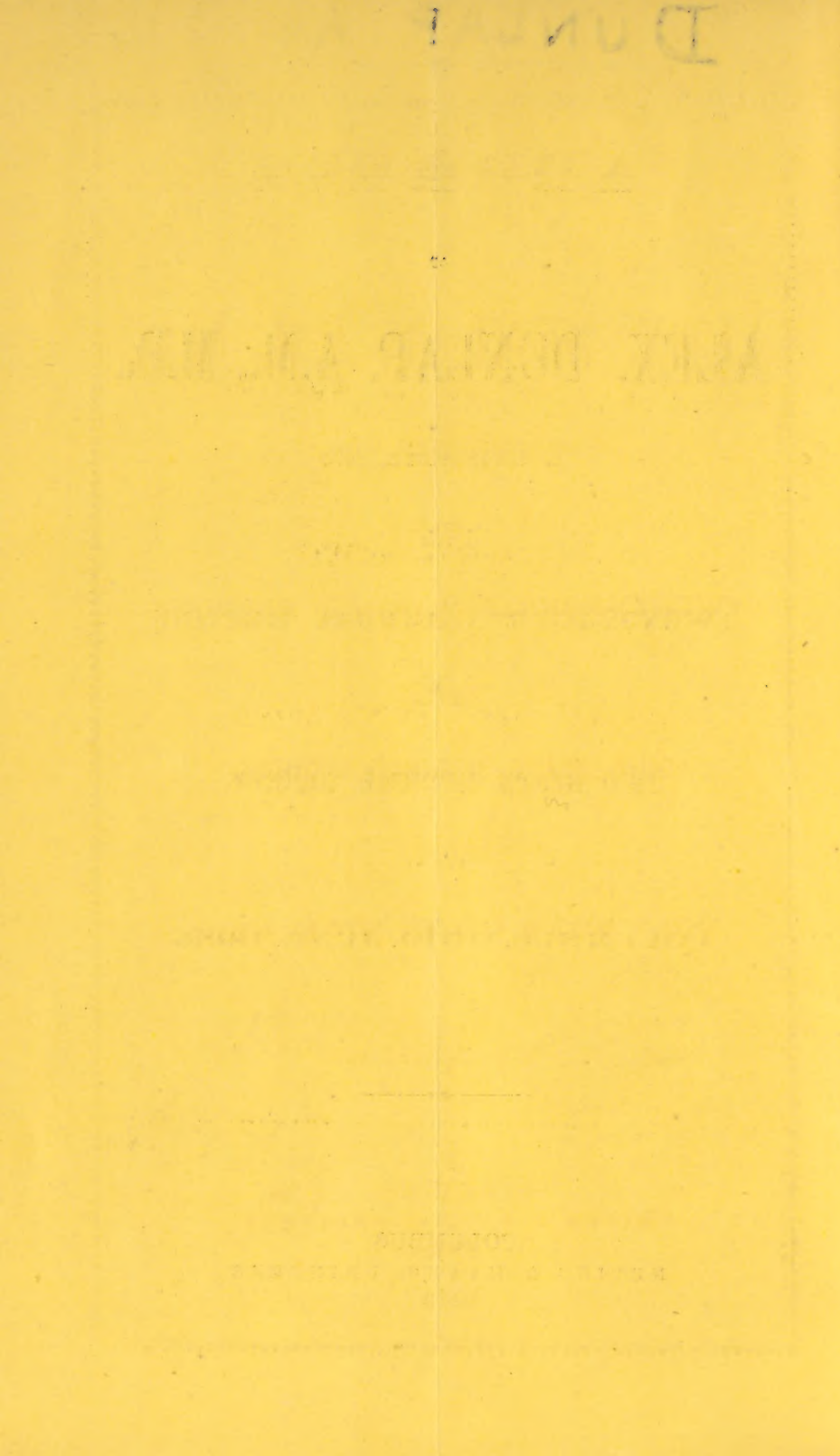
HELD AT

COLUMBUS, OHIO, JUNE, 1869.

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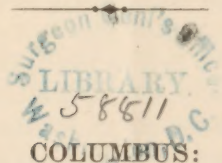
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ANNUAL ADDRESS
OF
PRESIDENT DUNLAP.

Gentlemen of the Ohio State Medical Society:

Through the kind care of an Over-ruling Providence, you have been again permitted to meet in counsel for the promotion of the interests of our profession.

Another year, with its months, and days, and hours, has rapidly passed, never to return. But the thoughts you have entertained, although for the present forgotten, you will have again to meet and recognize as the source of those emotions you have felt, and those actions you have done, giving character to your being.

For, as the vital force of the body, laying hold upon matter, and forming it into cells, builds up the physical frame into a form of beauty and strength, so the vital force of the soul, taking hold upon thought, incorporates it into its being, and grows in power and grandeur far beyond our present conception. Thought is the nourishment of the soul, and is as necessary to its development as food is to the body. If, then, the man who makes two grains of wheat to grow where only one grew before, is entitled to be called a benefactor of his race, how much more the man who gives a new idea of truth to the world, for the growth and development of the higher and more enduring part of our nature.

The investigation of the great laws which govern the physical and moral world, is the source whence we are to draw that nourishment of our intellectual and soul-life. The developments which have already been made are only the surface indications to the deeper and richer veins in this vast mine of intellectual wealth. And the man who, to-day, is standing with his arms folded, refusing to work, because, forsooth, he thinks a Newton, a Bacon, or others of the great workers of the world, have exhausted the field, is only deceiving himself, and will awaken to find that the world of knowledge has swept by, justly leaving him as a laggard, while others, going forward, have reaped the rich reward of their labors.

The various avocations of men have led them to work in the different fields of knowledge, each furnishing his share to the general stock for the development of the world's mind.

Does then, the study of our profession furnish us, as individuals, and as a body of workers, with the means of presenting to the world our due proportion of its intellectual nourishment?

I trust it will not be uninteresting or unprofitable, for the present hour, to review the great field which the study of our profession presents for investigation.

The world has called us pill peddlers—saw-bones—terms of derision, while at the same time they were feasting upon the rich repasts our profession had furnished them for their intellectual nourishment. But the world is often mistaken. Our studies do not call us into the busy scenes of life, amidst the struggling masses, for the accumulation of wealth in the great marts of trade; or to the forum, where the fiercer contests go on for the world's honors. But we are called to meet men at the bed-side of the sick, in the darkened chamber, in the presence of death, where the honors and emoluments of the world fade into insignificance.

Our labors lead us into the quiet laboratory, or into the green fields and wild forests; wherever the vital force is acting upon matter, then the physician may gather thoughts to

arm him for success in the warfare of life. On the battle field, our place is not amidst the roar of the cannon, or the "thundering of the captains, and the shouting," but in the retired hospital, among the wounded and dying, attending to friend and foe alike. Or, when the strife has ceased, and night has thrown a veil over the scene of horror, instead of seating himself to send greetings to friends and the world, of the glories of the victory, out upon the lone field, guided by the cry of pain, forgetful of himself, the medical man is found upon the errands of mercy.

Deliberate acts are the indication only of the character of the mind, the promptings of thought. The study of our profession, then, is capable of giving thoughts to the mind, which will enable it to conquer and govern its own selfish desires—the noblest victory of the world.

Our profession calls us to the investigation of the laws which govern the vital force, acting upon matter in the organization of man, influenced as it is, by those powers of the soul-life that distinguish him as a living being, from the beast of the field or the herb of the ground. In approaching the object of our study, the beauty of its form, the grace of its motion, excite thoughts and emotions of the highest order which the mind is capable of enjoying. With its curved lines, its rounded limbs, and swelling muscles, the artist has made it his model of beauty, for a life long study. But when we come to examine its construction, we find the laws of mechanics exemplified in their highest perfection.

Every muscle, every tendon, every lever, moving in the exact line to give the greatest power and motion, in the least possible space. The bones, the frame-work of the body, and at the same time acting as the levers for its motion, are formed so as to give the greatest strength with the least weight. The circulation of its fluids gives us the study of the most complete contrivance in Hydrodynamics that the world has ever seen. And so in the construction of the eye and the ear, the laws of light and sound as conveyed on the vibrations of the atmosphere, are exemplified in all their perfection.

The system of telegraphing through the nerves, uniting the whole body, and bringing every cell in its structure under the control of a governing power, regulating the movement of the whole, and giving harmony of action to the several parts, furnishes an example of law and order nowhere excelled in creation.

Thus far, however, we have only seen the body moved as the animal, or nourished as the plant.

The vital force, even in the plant, has instinct sufficient to guide it in seeking and making choice of its nourishment, and, consequently, we see it stretching out its branches in the direction of the light, and striking its roots deep into the earth seeking moisture.

The animal, however, with a higher power of nerve-life, is given the power of locomotion, together with a brighter instinct, to guide it in the preservation and nourishment of its body. Each of them has mind or instinct sufficient to range the limited space in which the nourishment for the growth and development of its body may be obtained.

But in man, together with the cell formation of the plant, and the nerve-life of the animal, we find the higher life of the soul, capable of ranging the whole universe of God, and drawing thence thoughts for its nourishment and growth, at once indicating the wonderful character of the being requiring such resources to supply its demands.

It is this compound being of mind and matter, with its vegetable, animal, and spiritual life, with which we have to deal. It is to the study of this wonderful power, the soul-life, acting upon the body, causing it to shout for joy, or tremble with fear, as thoughts calculated to produce these emotions pass through the mind, that our attention is directed.

Man, however, notwithstanding those wonderful powers of the soul, passes through this world, from his cradle to his grave, a helpless and dependent being. His first cry is the voice of want and helplessness, and his last tear flows from the same source. His body, under the control and influence of the laws which govern the physical and vital forces of na-

ture around him, yet without instinct, without the power of locomotion, his nourishment, his comforts, and his wants, have all to be supplied by the care of another, or he would perish in the hour of his birth.

He has to be watched with incessant vigilance, and guarded with unceasing care and anxiety, against a thousand diseases which await to precipitate him into a premature grave.

The quivering flame of an existence scarcely communicated, is exposed to sudden and furious blasts, and it requires all the skill of the physician, and the love of the parent, to interpose a screen which may prevent its extinction; and, alas! after all, such interposition as human skill and tenderness can supply, are often ineffectual, and the prevailing blast extinguishes the sickly flame.

But reason, though so weak at first, soon begins to manifest the presence of the soul-life, and is developed with the growth of the body. The laws which govern the forces of nature are discovered—thought enters the soul—those forces are made subservient to the purposes of the man, and he enjoys the blessings and comforts prepared for him by his Maker.

Thus we find that the object of our study, the physical organization of man, is operated on both by the spiritual and physical world, and that he who would be successful in developing the body, or, when it is deranged, in regulating the delicate organization of man, must understand and study with care the laws which govern them both.

It is not enough for the physician to know that Ipecac will vomit, and that Jalap will purge. The world is looking to us for instruction as to how the physical organization of the child shall be developed and strengthened, while the mind is being educated.

The people are constantly demanding of us knowledge on the subject of those subtle agencies in the physical world, which bring disease and death to their bodies.

But the investigation of the laws which govern the spiritual and physical world, involves a study beyond the powers

and grasp of any one mind, in the short space of time allotted to us in this life.

A division of labor has, therefore, been made. Each man has been required to choose his department. Some are found applying the telescope to the organ of vision, reading the laws and by spectral analysis learning the nature of yonder shining worlds. Some are giving their attention to the productions of this globe, and to the animals which move upon its surface. Others are investigating the chemical affinities of matter as it unites to form the varied objects of our world. Still others are studying the rights of man, as he enjoys his inheritance in this life, in common with his fellows. While others still are studying the moral obligations of man to his Creator, and to his fellow-men, in the light of revelation. Even the truths taught by this latter class, as far as they relate to man, or affect him in this life, are to be taken by the physician, and, together with all the knowledge furnished by the various departments of science, after having studied with care the structure of the human frame, to be applied by him in guarding and relieving the springs of life.

The same great law of nature, making all things subservient to man, is taught in the manner in which the material world works, to nourish his body and supply his wants. The great laboratory of nature is constantly at work, preparing food for plants and animals, to supply the wants and add to the comfort of man in this life.

Oxygen is united with hydrogen, and the seas are filled with water. Caloric is radiated from the sun, and those waters are converted into vapor. Gravitation drives them on high, and the wind spreads them abroad over the face of nature. Their caloric is discharged, and they again descend upon the earth in the form of rain and snow. The atmosphere is washed of its noxious gases, the ground is watered, and vegetable life springs forth, to gladden the eye of man with its beauty, or rejoice his heart with the fruits of the seasons, as they are poured in profusion at his feet. The tiny leaflet, as it trembles in the breeze, drinks in the sun-

light of heaven, and uniting it with carbon, stores by in the woody fiber, a power through whose agency man unites continents, and equalizes the productions of the globe.

Even the electric force, in whose presence man stood for ages, and gazed with wonder and trembled with fear, in witnessing the exhibition of its power, as it leaped from cloud to cloud, or shivered the majestic oak in its pathway to the earth, as its laws have become known, has quietly submitted to do man's bidding, and to become his messenger in supplying his wants.

And thus all nature appears eager to do man service. He has only to reach out his hand, and grasp whatever she will give him. To bring her offerings and lay them at his feet, seems to be *the law* of all her laws, the very purpose for which she was created.

But, as we have already seen, although nature exists for man, her homage is, in some degree, involuntary. Her principles and her facts must be sought for, or they cannot be ascertained. The master cannot bend his slave to his will with violence, but must entreat her quietly, and win her love by patient persuasion, or she will elude his grasp. To find out what laws and elements of external nature bear directly, or through the medium of the soul-life, upon the growth, health, and longevity of the body, is the peculiar province of the physician. Shall we call it province? Is it not rather the whole empire of science? May we not say with Bacon, "we take all knowledge for our province."

But there is one part of our duty which I have only incidentally touched upon. To preserve the life of the body and mind in vigor, is to know the laws of death, and so far as we can, to guard against the influence.

Nature obeys man, but there is a point where she turns upon him, and from the serf changes to the tyrant. She triumphs over him. Every force with which she has ministered to his life, she now summons to avenge her servitude upon his helpless body. Does she offer him a home? It is

in mockery! For that home is the chill and lonely grave! Shall we call this the treachery of nature? Whatever may be our views as philosophic thinkers, or as believers in revelation, as physicians we must count it so, and by every means in our power provide against it. We will yield at last, but may often protract the struggle.

As physicians, then, we must bend our whole power of mind to the preservation of the body. We may leave to others the question, whether the law of death is not another blessing which nature offers to man, in freeing the soul-life from the body, that it may live and grow upon thought, in discovering the laws of nature, and in studying those subtle agencies which so easily elude its grasp in this life.

Three causes of death demand the investigation, and task the skill of the physician.

First—General ignorance as to the laws of life, which, when violated, impose death as their penalty. This ignorance we must remove, giving to all men so much knowledge of that intricate machine, the body, as will enable them to minister to its wants. In doing this, however, it is not necessary that we shall describe to the world all of the operations of these laws, or the structure of the body; in other words, it is not necessary that every man shall become a physician, in order that he may obey the laws of nature. We, indeed, have no secret mysteries, from which profane eyes are to be excluded, that, in the darkness, we may appear more wonderful than we would be in the light. But in every profession, or even handicraft, so far as its peculiar public teaching-work is concerned, there must be a certain economy, or reserve of the knowledge, which appertains to it. So far as our instructions in regard to the rules of hygiene, will tend to render our assistance at sick beds unnecessary, we are bound to give them, but no farther, unless we would produce worse evils than we wish to prevent. The knowledge of anatomy and physiology which the quack proposes to impart, is no more needful to men in general, than the knowledge of

the gunsmith's art is to the hunter, or the locksmith's to the bank clerk.

A knowledge necessarily superficial is often the pander to vice, disease, and death, rather than the minister at the gates of bodily vigor and mental purity.

As certain sciences have become more popular, the world has grown more wicked.

Ante-natal infanticide and kindred vices, owe their abominable frequency to the disposition of the men and women of our inquisitive age to pry into matters which the physician must know, but of which others than he had better remain in ignorance.

Secondly—Those subtle poisons, emanating from the world of nature, to which men are involuntarily subjected, and of which they are even unconcious, until disease manifests their presence in the citadel of life. I will not discuss the question, whether or not these various malarial influences are possessed of animal or vegetable life, or whether they are poisons in themselves, or only become such when they operate on bodies which are already in an unnatural, if not positively morbid condition.

It is enough to say that as things now stand, they are the cunning foes of health and vitality, whose strategy the physician must study, whose ambushade he must guard against, and whose attacks he must counteract, by all the remedial agencies which he has obtained from nature herself.

Third—"The defects of nature, and the taints of blood." Those abortive efforts of the vital force in the formation of the cell structure. Those hereditary predispositions, which weaken the hold of life upon the body. All those causes which originate in the body or mind, bringing premature decay, hastening on old age, and hurrying the body to the grave.

Such, gentlemen, are some of the more prominent points presented for investigation, in the study of our profession; the knowledge of which is of the highest importance to man in this life.

Not, as before stated, that all men should be taught the *modus operandi* of those laws. Far from it. On this point I do not wish to be misunderstood.

Children have a right to expect from their parents, and instructors in the various departments of science, all that knowledge which will enable them to care for their bodies, or that will make them useful in benefiting others, in the various avocations of life which they may follow.

But when you undertake to make that knowledge general, which may be made to pander to the passions of mankind, you have led them into temptations from which you have no reason to expect them to escape. And such are some of the truths which are necessarily developed in the study of our profession.

The charlatan, traveling through the country, getting up health associations, lecturing on selected topics of physiology, and the author, scattering broadcast his works as guides to health, under their various forms and titles, understand well the character of their patrons. They each know, that if, for their patrons, a plausible excuse can only be made before the world, for stimulating their appetites and gratifying their curiosity, they can easily reach their purse, even at the sacrifice of their purity of character, health of body, and, it may be, yea, and often is, of life itself.

But, it may be asked, if these facts, developed by our study, are so dangerous, why receive them into our own minds? Gentlemen, they are committed to our keeping, just as the violent poisons of the physical world are, and for whose right use an intelligent christian public is holding us responsible. Men should be made responsible for damage done by anything known to be dangerous, which they may turn loose upon society, whether it be an "ox that is wont to push with his horn," or an idea.

But, turning from these darker phases of our studies we behold, a brighter scene, the medical science going forward, surrounded by all the other physical sciences as her hand-maidens, and off-shoots, scattering light and knowledge in

her pathway, to purify, enlighten, and elevate the world. Thus we see the temple of our science, at whose shrine we are worshipping, whose existence was called for by the wants of humanity, whose foundations are resting upon the laws of nature, and whose oracles are giving out light and knowledge, to nourish, and bless mankind, rising in beautiful proportions amidst the confusion of those who would prostitute her to the purposes of mammon and passion.

Gentlemen, you are now the builders of this fair temple on whose walls are engraven the names of Drake, Dudley, Mussey and others, of our own section of country—men who did well their work of yesterday in erecting this fair fabric. Add your labors faithfully to theirs. For it is to-day your privilege to dress a stone, or spread the mortar, or drive a nail, in its erection, as a memorial to your names, ere the tools shall drop from your hands, to be taken up, and used by others to morrow.

